Recognizing Your Demon Dialogue

On Your Own - See if you can plot out the steps in the usual negative dance you find yourself caught in with your partner.

When you suddenly find that you do not feel safely connected to your partner or there’s tension between you, what do you usually do?

See if you can find a descriptor in the list below that fits for you (mark all that apply):

- Try to get information
- Complain
- Become critical
- Ask Questions
- Blame or point out your mistakes
- Yell
- Tell you how to improve
- Become angry – blow up
- Express frustration or anger
- Express disapproval
- Define you as THE problem
- Make consequences or threats
- Tell you how to change
- Prod/Plead
- Demand attention
- Insist on making my point

Now, fill in the blank to complete this sentence using the descriptors you marked in the list above: “When things are not going right between us, I find that I tend to do some of these things/actions ___________________________ which moves my attention and energy towards you (your partner).”

See if there are any of these things you tend to do when there’s tension between you.

- Problem solve
- Become very logical
- Zone out
- Change the subject
- Stay calm and reason with you
- Shut you out
- Not listening and numbing out
- Focus elsewhere
- Go into my shell – like a turtle
- Protect myself by distancing
- Refuse to talk
- Give up and withdraw
- Find an exit
- Leave, turning to a task
- Try, or imagine getting away
- Freeze/ not respond
- Shrug off your concern
- Minimize your concern
- Defending myself by showing you you’re wrong
- Find an exit
- Freeze/ not respond
- Minimize your concern

Now, fill in the blank to complete this sentence using the descriptors you marked in the list above: “When things are not going right between us, I find that I tend to do some of these things/actions ___________________________ which moves my attention and energy away from you (your partner).”
**On Your Own**

Summarize:

“Based on the above actions I take, when there’s tension between us, I tend to”: (fill in the blanks/s).

A. “move towards you (your partner) by: __________________.”

And/OR

B. “move away from you (your partner) by: __________________.”

Taking turns, share your responses above with your partner.

**Part 2. Combining the moves.**

**On Your Own**

In your own words describe how you see your moves and your partners moves.

A. Start by putting your common move in. Then add in your partner’s common move.

“The more I ____________, the more you (your partner) ____________,

(action) (action)

And, then the more I ____________ and around and round we go.”

Now reverse the order. First put your partner’s common move in, then add in your move.

“The more you (your partner) ____________, the more I ____________.

(action) (action)

And then the more you (your partner) ___________ and around and round we go.”

This is the basic outline your main Demon Dialogue (negative cycle). Discuss it with your partner.

B. The couples in the DVD call their negative pattern the Tornado, the Vortex and the Nothing.

See if you can agree on a name for your main Demon Dialogue and write it here.
Part 3. Adding Hard or Hot Emotions.

On Your Own

A. See if you can find a descriptor in the list below that fits for you so you can complete this sentence;

“When things are not going right between us, I find that I tend to have this hard or hot emotion” (or use your own word):

- Mad
- Irritated
- Defensive
- Frustrated
- Resentful
- Frozen/Numb
- Shut down
- On the spot
- Controlled
- Upset
- Disturbed
- Tense

B. Put together your hot or hard emotion with the way you make sense out of your partner’s response. For example:

“When I feel irritated, I demand explanations. And then you defend and the way I make sense of that is that you’re sending me this message, ‘I don’t really care about what you want me to do. In fact, you’re not that important to me.’ And then I feel more mad and I demand more. And around and around we go.”

“When I feel ________________, I ________________
(hard or hot emotion) (action)

And then you (your partner) _____________ and I hear it as a message saying
(action)

something like ‘____________________’ and then I feel
(meaning)

________________. And then I _____________. And around and around we go.”
(hard or hot emotion) (action)

Taking turns, share your responses with your partner.
**Part 4. Adding your partner's meaning to your reaction.**

**On Your Own**

A. Start by putting your part in. Then add in your partner’s understanding.

“When I feel ______________________, I ________________

(hard or hot emotion) (action)

You (your partner) hear this as me sending a message to you that says something like

“____________________” so you feel _____________________

(meaning/attribution) (hard or hot emotion)

and then you _______________ and I think you're sending me a message

(action)

message that says something like “____________________________

______________________________”

(the meaning/attribution I give to my partner's response)

then I feel ______________________ and then I ______________________.

(hard or hot emotion) (action)

And around and around we go.”

B. **Share** your version with your partner and see if you can merge each of your responses into a version you can both endorse.

**Part 5. Thought questions.**

**On Your Own**

Has this dance always been part of your relationship or did it get going at a specific time? Respond on the back side of this paper.

Do you think you learned your move in this dance in a previous relationship? If so, how did it help you in that relationship?

Taking turns, **share these responses** with your partner.